

The Police Sweat Box.

For nearly ten years we have felt like one crying in the wilderness as we have urged the inhumanity and illegality of the police sweat box. It is an inquisition which denies to prisoners accused of crime their legal right to demand proof; its cruelty is extreme; and it is conducted by irresponsible policemen. The community tolerates it only because the moulders of public opinion, notwithstanding their professed abhorrence of anarchy, are themselves anarchists in the worst sense of that word of many meanings. There seems now, however, to be a gradual awakening to the enormity of this official crime. From one part of the country and another we begin to have newspaper denunciations. Here is one, for example, from the Cleveland Plain Dealer of the 17th, dealing with a local case: "A poor, ignorant, friendless unfortunate, never proved guilty and always presumptively innocent, was made the victim of almost medieval tortures by policemen, who vented upon him their savage disappointment growing, in the main, out of their own stupidity. No prisoner in court is subjected to such questioning and no convict in these days is made to undergo such physical torment. This proceeding is not only without warrant of law, but also in utter defiance of all law. . . . The public have a right to demand that if the police cannot capture criminals they shall at least refrain from crime themselves." The particular sweat box process alluded to by the Plain Dealer is described in these words by the Jewish Independent of Cleveland: "It was worse than Russian barbarity on the part of the local police department to tear David Hoenig away from the bosom of his family the very moment his wife and children needed consolation most, and subject him to a brutal sweat box examination. Can anyone imagine a more horrible infliction? First, the awful discovery that his child had been murdered, and then, instead of leaving the man alone in his grief, his home was invaded and he was torn away from his wife and children and plied with the most outrageous questions human mind can conceive of. There is certainly something wrong in such a system. It is a return to the torture chamber of Spain. It is an admission by the American Republic that Russian methods are right." This kind of barbarity is not confined to Cleveland. It was imported by Superintendent Byrnes from Europe to New York, where it is still practiced. We hear of it in Philadelphia. And it is common in Chicago, where it has caused the official hanging of at least one innocent man, and permitted the escape of the murderers whose crime he expiated with his life.—Chicago Public.

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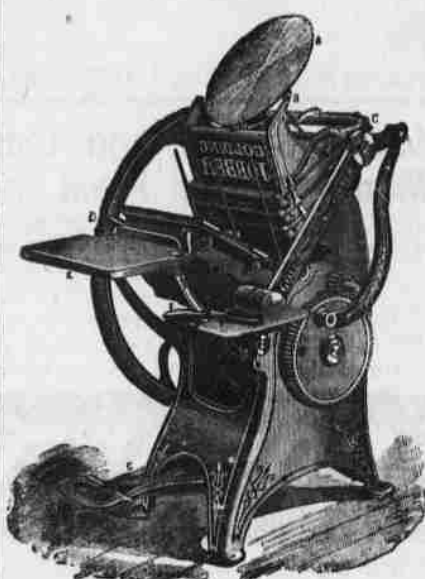


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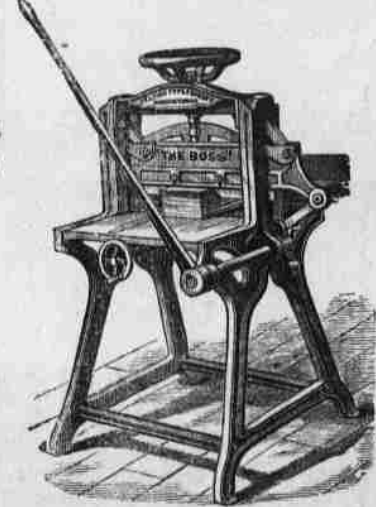
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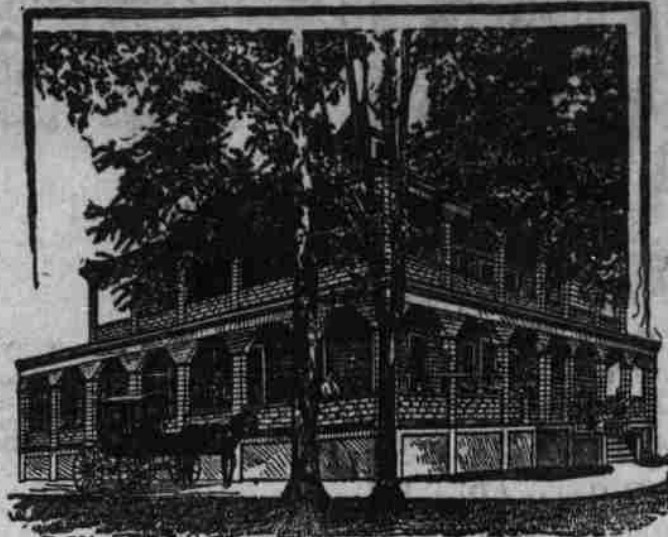
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